

TRICKS THAT MAKE THE SMALL HOUSE SEEM SPACIOUS

Illusion of Size May Be Created in Rooms by Low Ceilings, Delicate Woodwork and Furnishings, and Elimination of Non-Essentials—Other Salient Hints Regarding That Home You Mean to Build

By A. RAYMOND ELLIS, Architect.

Failure to properly consider the site and the layout of the ground in relation to roadways, paths, service yard, terraces, lawns, gardens and outbuildings has been the cause of many serious defects in the design of American small houses, because of the fact that many of these items are great deal to do with determining the essential location of the main rooms and entrances of the house. It seems consistent, therefore, to study both the plan of the lot and the plan of the house at the same time.

Before considering too carefully the details of the interior arrangement of the house it might be well to consider whether there are fundamental defects in both design and plan that have become accepted as standard when they might be improved. These questions may seem more or less remote from the technical side of architecture. Yet at the present time it seems advisable to give them full emphasis. This might be regarded in the nature of a test in order to ascertain whether present house designs meet fully the modern conditions and demands made upon them, both as to utility and economy.

The plan is the most important feature in any architectural composition. Without a proper plan it is impossible to expect that the architect will be able to design a house that will be a satisfactory architectural design for the exterior. Since it is more or less difficult for the average client to read a plan it is hardly expected that he will analyze the entire scheme sufficiently to grasp the details of practical arrangement, construction and mechanical appliances to see if they are combined with proper architectural design. The architect is influenced in his design by the character of the site and its surroundings. That is, a house may be very simple in design with warm stucco walls as illustrated here, relieved by a band of "frieze" foliage, or it may be a house having strong features, more or less dramatic in character, standing out prominently from its surroundings. The latter is the more frequent type of house, and with each other rather than to have each with an individuality that forms too strong a contrast. This is perhaps illustrated in American houses by the recent real estate developments in the vicinity of New York, where the charm of the houses produces an effect of harmony which has not been ruined by the introduction of houses of "frieze" design. When we begin to approach the designing of houses from this angle we approach very closely to the American tradition, and we find that the American house is much more of a house, far more in fact, than the European family. The

has brought certain changes that probably require further improvement and readjustment. One of the effects already felt is the imposing of strict limitations of cost, not only as far as the construction of the house is concerned but with relation to its maintenance afterward.

The first effect is to cause a reduction in the space in the house plan. This is already quite noticeable in the houses built in the last year, and the houses built in the next two or three years may lose some of the spaciousness which has been considered since early Colonial days as essential to the American home.

It was not infrequently to find many medium sized houses with a hall 10 feet wide, a dining room 17 feet square and back of it a library 10x17 and a living room 17x20. These sizes presented a

problem. Perhaps some of our old houses

may have smaller dimensions that are still satisfactory and give the feeling of spaciousness, but on examination it will be found that this is due to the fact that the ceiling heights are as low as eight feet, which, with the use of the small and delicate eighteenth century furniture, has a tendency to maintain good proportions. In one of the most beautiful examples of a small house on Long Island the principal rooms are small, 14 feet square, and yet they do not seem small, but the ceilings are

little over 7 feet 6 inches high. The walls are covered with delicately carved panelings, simple wood cornices and the windows are small with panes of glass 6x8 inches. The furniture is of the delicate eighteenth century pattern and therefore in perfect scale with the rooms.

These are some of the features which we will have to consider if we are going to reduce the cost of building by reducing the area and height of our rooms. Therefore, if the width of the dining room and living room is less than eight or ten feet, and the width of the entrance hall is less than nine feet, there is a possibility that these rooms may seem cramped, and since these rooms on the ground floor are the most important in the small house, as most of the family life is carried on therein, the whole house in a failure if they are not properly proportioned. If they are reduced to dimensions as small as thirteen feet for principal rooms and a height of eight feet only, very low ceilings and delicate details of woodwork and furniture may redeem them.

There is a great difference between rooms that seem cozy and rooms that seem cramped. It is impossible to mention here all of the ways of modifying our plans in order to retain the air of spaciousness and scale, but there are several methods already known and more may be found. It may be necessary to increase the size of openings between principal rooms in order to borrow space from each other.

Another method is the elimination of

unnecessary features that are not essential to the life of the house.

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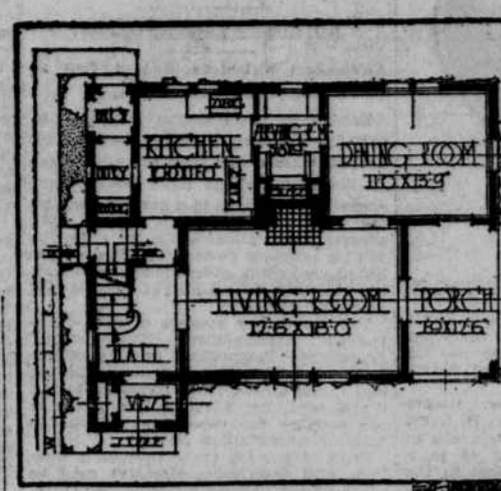
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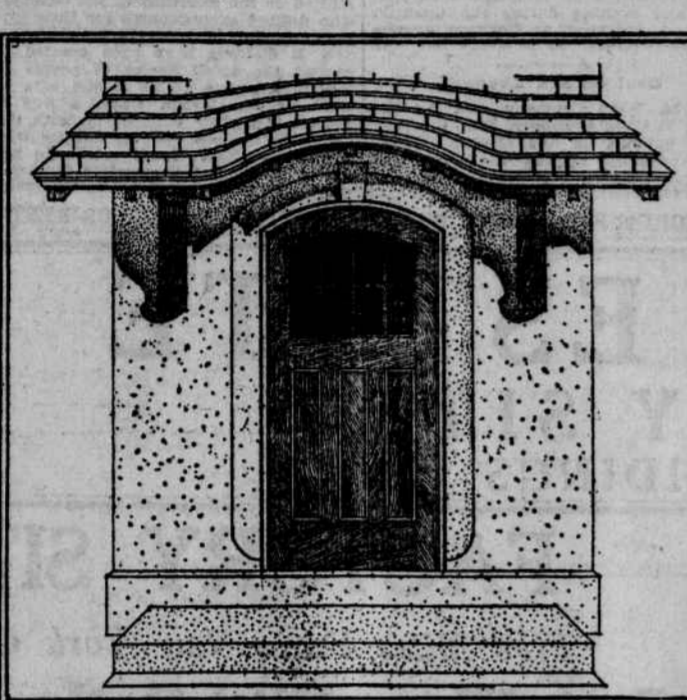
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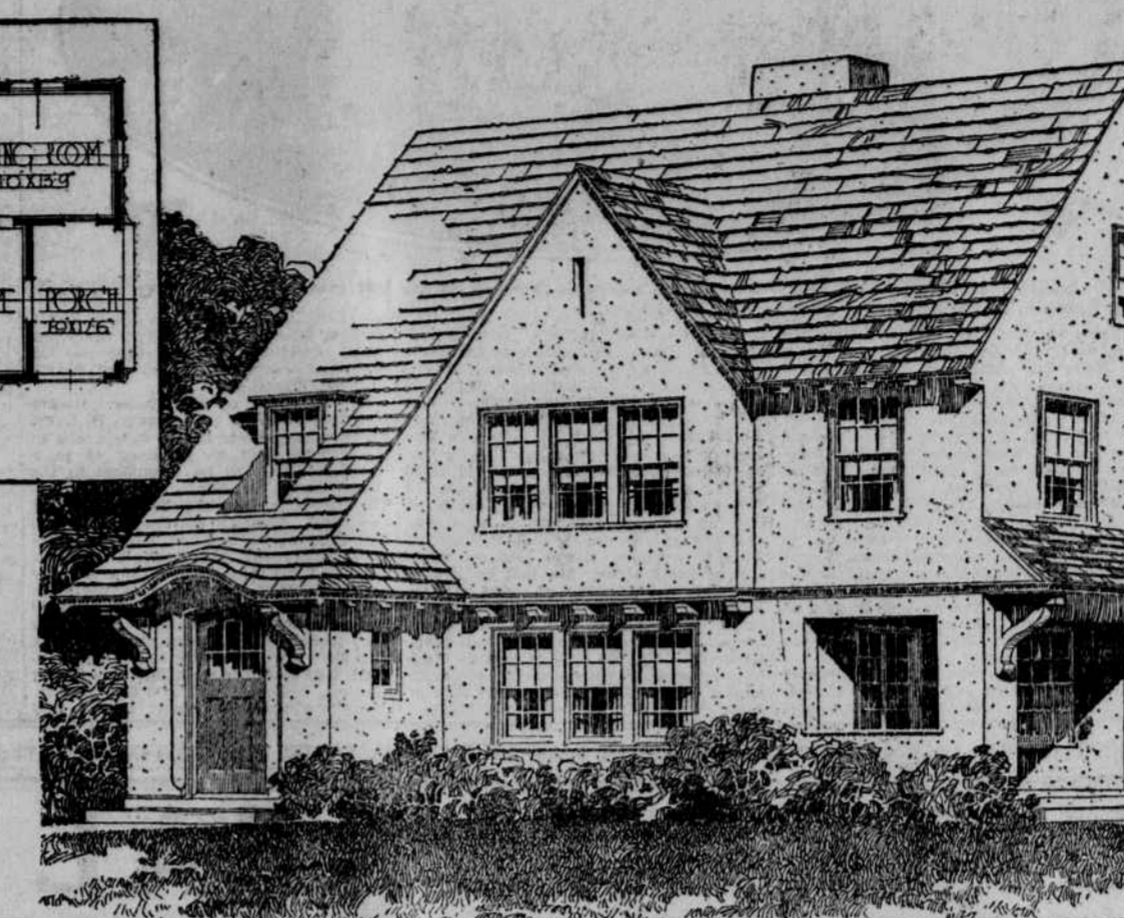
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN



DETAIL OF THE ENTRANCE DOORWAY



A FRAME STUCCO HOUSE OF SIMPLE BUT ORIGINAL DESIGN IN WHICH THE ARCHITECT, A. RAYMOND ELLIS, HAS EMBODIED ALL THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES REQUIRED IN A SMALL, MODERATE PRICED HOME

little over 7 feet 6 inches high. The walls are covered with delicately carved panelings, simple wood cornices and the windows are small with panes of glass 6x8 inches. The furniture is of the delicate eighteenth century pattern and therefore in perfect scale with the rooms.

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